



Guide to Individual Reconciliation

Read over this guide to prepare for participating in an Individual Reconciliation. The most important thing to remember is that this is a prayer—you do not need to know all of the responses perfectly. If you are unsure, ask the priest and he will guide you. The key is to relax, to pray and to let God love you through this sacrament!

Step 1. Preparation

We prepare ourselves for Reconciliation by thinking about God's love and our choices.

- ✦ We remember the commandments and all we have learned about how to follow Jesus.
- ✦ We reflect on people who have been hurt by our choices, and on the times when these choices have hurt ourselves.
- ✦ We take time to consider our relationship with God and ways that we can grow in our relationship.

(Use the Examination of Conscience on page four as a way to think, pray and prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)

Step 2. Welcome & Greeting

Similar to the way that we greet people we care about, the priest welcomes us in kindness. We respond in prayer by making the Sign of the Cross.

Response: *In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The priest reminds us to have confidence in God's love through a prayer.

Response: *Amen.*

After the prayer, we share with him how long it has been since our last confession. This helps the priest to guide us in our confession. He does not need an exact date, but an approximate amount of time: it has been a month, or a year. If we do not remember, we can say it has been a long time.

Response: *It has been _____ since my last confession.*

Step 3. Sharing the Word of God

Sometimes, the priest helps us to remember God's Word by sharing from the Bible a passage about love and forgiveness.

Step 4. Confession & Penance

We share with the priest a confession of our sins. During our preparation, on what actions and choices did we reflect? What are we sorry for? We share these areas in confession. We can share our failings in confidence—everything we share with the priest in confession is "sealed." One way to get started is to complete the response, followed by sharing our sins.

Response: *I confess to almighty God...*

Sometimes, the priest will help us to search our heart for these areas of brokenness. He also can give us advice and guidance about how to follow God's love and how to fix what has been broken.

The priest gives us an act of penance. This can be a prayer, an act of service or a way to heal a broken relationship. Through penance we begin to heal the brokenness, and we grow stronger in our faith in God.

Step 5. Penitent's Prayer & Absolution

After having shared the story of our sin and our hope to love, we say a prayer that expresses our sorrow and our commitment to change. A prayer that tells God that we are sorry, that we will change our actions, and that we will avoid what leads to sin is a good act of contrition. This prayer can be our own words, a prayer from Scripture or a prayer that we know.

Response: Share a prayer in your own words or use the prayer of the Church on the next page.

Following the prayer, the priest extends his hands over us and prays over us. This includes the prayer of absolution.

I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Step 6. Praise & Dismissal

Filled with peace, we praise God's love and give thanks by sharing a short prayer from scripture.

Priest: *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.*

Response: *His mercy endures forever.*

The priest dismisses us and sends us forth in peace.



Reconciliation

Reflection & Prayers

Examination of Conscience

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 22: 36-40

"Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind." This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments."
(Matthew 22:36-40 CEV)

Reflection Questions

- + Is my heart set on God, so that I really love God above all things and am faithful to God's commandments? Are the things of this world like money, prestige, or status truly secondary to my faith in God?
- + Am I continuing to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Do I pray regularly and read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus? Am I growing in my understanding of my Catholic faith?
- + Do I worship God regularly by celebrating the Eucharist with an active and conscious participation? Do I celebrate the healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year?
- + Have I been loving and faithful in my relationships, especially with my spouse, family members, and significant relationships?
- + Do I live my life guided by Catholic values, such as respect for dignity of others, respect for creation and the environment, love, care and compassion, forgiveness, honesty, integrity? Which values have I neglected to live faithfully?
- + Do I take seriously the call to serve those in need, to alleviate suffering, to share my gifts, talents, and possessions with others? Do I work for justice for victims of oppression, discrimination, and poverty?

- + Am I ready to forgive and work for peace in my relationships and in my world?
- + Do I live my Catholic faith and moral principles in the workplace and in the community? Are my decisions in the workplace guided by Catholic moral principles?

Prayer for Forgiveness The Prayer of the Penitent

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with all
my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do
good,
I have sinned against you whom I should
love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads to sin.*

*(Rite of Penance © 1973 International Committee on
English in the Liturgy, Inc. [ICEL].
Used with permission.)*

Prayer for Forgiveness

Forgiving God, we are sorry for the wrong choices we have made. We are sorry for the times that we have been lost from you. We know that you forgive us and that you rejoice when we come back to you. We thank you for the feeling of peace that comes from your forgiveness.

Help us to forgive others. Help us to share your peace with the people around us.
Amen.